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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the importance of teaching English language learners (ELLs) three reading strategies to help facilitate a productive literacy environment, suggesting that students must be taught specific reading strategies in which purpose, comprehension, and memorization are facilitated. The first section presents a pre-reading strategy, focusing on a K-W-L (know-want to know-learned) worksheet, which graphically assists ELLs in understanding specific information in a variety of content areas. The second section offers a during-reading strategy that utilizes word clusters (graphic organizers in which categorizations are used to promote vocabulary building). The third section describes a post-reading strategy involving Venn diagrams (two interconnected circles for comparing or contrasting two words or concepts). Each section introduces the concept and describes the procedure and purpose. These strategies can be adjusted to varying degrees of reading proficiency. (SM)

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Teaching Readings Strategies to English Language Learners

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Teaching Readings Strategies to English Language Learners

English language learners (ELLs) are confronted with a multitude of academic challenges that every teacher must be aware of. Before applying literacy pedagogies in a multilingual classroom, teachers must consider the specific variables inherent in all minority language learners (e.g., affective filter, motivation, socioeconomic status (SES), prior education, proficiency in the first language (L1), proficiency in the target language (L2), cognitive ability, and cultural background). Understanding the intrinsic and extrinsic variables that influence the academic state of ELLs will lead to accurate and appropriate assessments—in addition, lesson activities can be tailored to the specific learning styles of each student. It is important to note that continuous assessment and understanding of students' background is necessary (Peregoy & Boyle 2001). It would be careless for educators to assume an initial assessment of a student's academic ability in the beginning of the year will be an adequate measurement in understanding the student as a whole. Throughout the year, students overcome prior educational barriers and are constantly faced with new challenges. If minority language students come from different academic and social backgrounds, and are constantly evolving academically throughout the year, how can a teacher possibly overcome the difficulties in promoting literacy success to such a heterogeneous group of students?

One way educators can comprehend and adjust the differences in literacy ability is to use pre-reading strategies. A fundamental feature of all pre-reading strategies is to tap into students' prior knowledge (Mallow & Patterson, 1999). Although pre-reading strategies fall short in providing all of the information needed to completely understand a minority language student, enough data is provided to accurately adjust literacy activities to the benefit of a linguistically diverse audience (e.g., effectively pair students, adjust levels of literacy scaffolds, understand areas of interest, promote motivation, and set a purpose for reading). After setting clear objectives and purposes for reading text, teachers must provide ELLs with the necessary tools to monitor comprehension during the reading activity. During-reading strategies offer ELLs the questioning and predicting skills essential to the development of reading comprehension (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001). Establishing comprehension is a fundamental means to the production of memorization. Although during-reading strategies may assist in memorizing salient points, post-reading strategies' primary purpose is to help retain the information crucial to the literacy success of ELLs.

The objective of the present workshop is to discuss the significance in teaching ELLs strategies that will help facilitate a productive literacy environment. Students must be taught specific reading strategies in which purpose, comprehension, and memorization are facilitated. As mentioned previously, ELLs posses a wealth of various literacy strengths and challenges. The reading strategies discussed in the present workshop will give teachers confidence in meeting the literacy demands of a linguistically diverse classroom. The underpinnings of each reading strategy will also build concrete literacy skills in which ELLs will be able to tackle more cognitively demanding reading tasks. Correlation will be made between research-based theory and reading strategies (pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading). In addition, one example for each reading strategy will be discussed in detail. In order to provide instructional flexibility, suggestions to modifying each reading strategy will be offered. Although much emphasis will be

on the specific benefits of reading strategies, a brief analysis of empirical studies will be included to help validate subsequent methodologies.

Pre-Reading Strategy

Developing ELLs into proficient readers is an obvious literacy objective. However, many educators are unaware of the specific characteristics required for reading proficiency. Before implementing a pre-reading strategy, careful attention should be placed on the grammatical proficiency (e.g., semantic, syntax, grapho-phonemics, or pragmatic knowledge) a student possesses (Mallow & Patterson, 1999). By doing so, educators can appropriately apply reading activities relevant to literacy abilities.

Introduction to a K-W-L Worksheet

A K-W-L is a pre-reading strategy that graphically assists ELLs in understanding specific information in a variety of content areas (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001). The K-W-L worksheet consists of three columns (see Table 1 & Appendix 1) in which a framework of knowledge is developed through the oral participation of ELLs—the "K" column represents the knowledge ELLs already know—the "W" column represents the knowledge ELLs want to know—the "L" column represents the knowledge ELLs have learned after completing the reading task.

Table 1

K-W-L Chart

"K" Know	"W" Want to Know	"L" Learned

Procedure

Teachers introduce a reading activity by asking the ELLs what information they already know about the proposed topic. The ELLs should then brainstorm the information they believe should be included in the "K" column. Depending on the level of reading proficiency, teachers can provide literacy scaffolds to model *skimming strategies* for extracting important words or ideas from the text. After the questions are included in the "W" column, the passage is reread to complete the "L" column. The K-W-L activity can conclude with an oral or written discussion on the connections made between the "W' and "L" columns.

Purpose

A K-W-L worksheet facilitates connections between prior and new knowledge (Mallow & Patterson, 1999). Tapping into background knowledge is an important scaffold that will help activate interest and motivation (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001). By participating in the "W" column, ELLs are held responsible for learning and interpreting the information in the "L" column. In

addition, oral communication is promoted through brainstorming—*collaborative work* is promoted through sharing knowledge—a meaningful purpose is established through questioning new knowledge (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001).

During-Reading Strategy

During-reading strategies should be used to accommodate comprehension in the reading task (Peregoy & Boyle 2001). The strategies used for during-reading strategies are similar to the "W" column of the K-W-L chart—where clues from the text are used by the ELLs to assist in asking questions and extracting pertinent information. It is crucial for teachers to establish a clear reading purpose—not doing so will provide ELLs with ambiguous paradigms for monitoring reading success (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001). Although most during-reading strategies emphasis questioning strategies for ELLs (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001), the present workshop will focus on vocabulary building strategies during reading. As ELLs become proficient readers, the vocabulary used in texts becomes increasingly difficult (Mallow & Patterson, 1999). The level of comprehension lies heavily on the ability to relate new material to established concepts or words. One method for establishing connections between new information and prior knowledge is to utilize *word clusters*.

Introduction to Word Clusters

A word cluster is a type of *graphic organizer* in which categorizations are used to promote vocabulary building. Graphic organizers are important scaffolds that provide visual representations of key concepts (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001). Although word clusters can vary greatly in shape and size, the structure of the following example should be followed with reasonable accordance.

Procedure

Teachers introduce vocabulary-building strategies by presenting a passage with an omitted word (see Table 2 & Appendix 2). A blackboard or overhead projector can be used to accommodate larger classes. Students are asked to read the passage and guess the omitted word. Teachers are encouraged to use literacy scaffolds that help identify textual clues and assist in lexical selection. The word cluster begins with a blank circle (represents the omitted word)—as students participate in the guessing activity, the teacher adds more circles (represents the guessed words) to the graphic organizer (see Table 3). Adding the omitted word to the center circle completes the word cluster activity.

Purpose

Using words clusters provide ELLs with valuable schemas for building vocabulary and assisting in future reading comprehension (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001). Studies have shown that cognitive processes within individuals are represented in a similar word cluster schema (Mallow & Patterson, 1999). In addition, the omitted word in the reading task provides ELLs with valuable literacy tools that will enable them to use context cues for reading comprehension. Words clusters also provide many opportunities for ELLs to practice their oral, reading, and

predicting skills (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001). Motivation is supported by the curiosity of discovering the omitted word. More importantly, the successful completion of a word cluster will give ELLs a wealth of meaningful synonyms. The development and application of word similarities will be the catalyst for future comprehension of challenging readings.

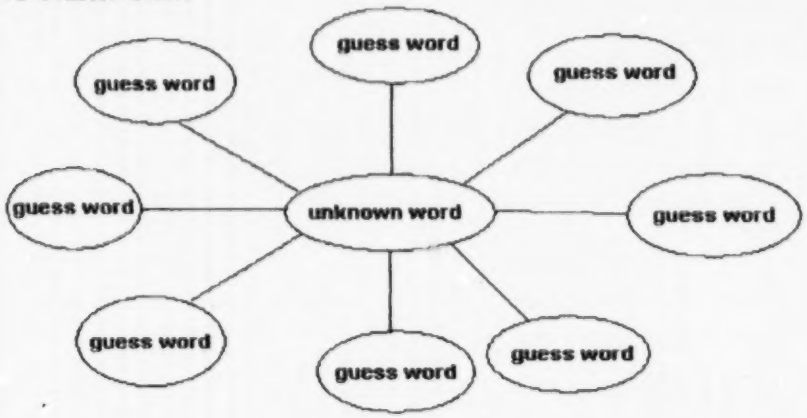
Table 2

Word Cluster Reading Passage

Chris enjoys teaching literacy strategies to both in-service and pre-service teachers. In his free time, Chris enjoys _____ books for both pleasure and professional development.

Table 3

Word Cluster Chart



Post-Reading Strategy

The next logical step in the pursuit of reading proficiency is to arrange key concepts or words into a system of order. The primary purpose of a post-reading activity is to teach strategies that will help ELLs remember what they have read (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001). Although the mechanical nature of repetition (not to be confused with rehearsal), has been historically viewed as an ineffective means to meaningful memory procedures, thoughtful reorganization and presentation of facts can lead to significant understanding (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001). Rehearsing to categorize and retain important concepts or words can be accomplished by developing graphic organizers. The following post-reading activity will focus on the use of Venn diagrams.

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Introduction to Venn Diagrams

A Venn diagram, illustrated as two interconnected circles, is useful when two words or concepts are compared and contrasted (see Table 4 & Appendix 3). ELLs are required to carefully analyze and select words that represent the differences or similarities within two concepts. Thus, Venn diagrams require a high level of cognitive skills and lexical development.

Procedure

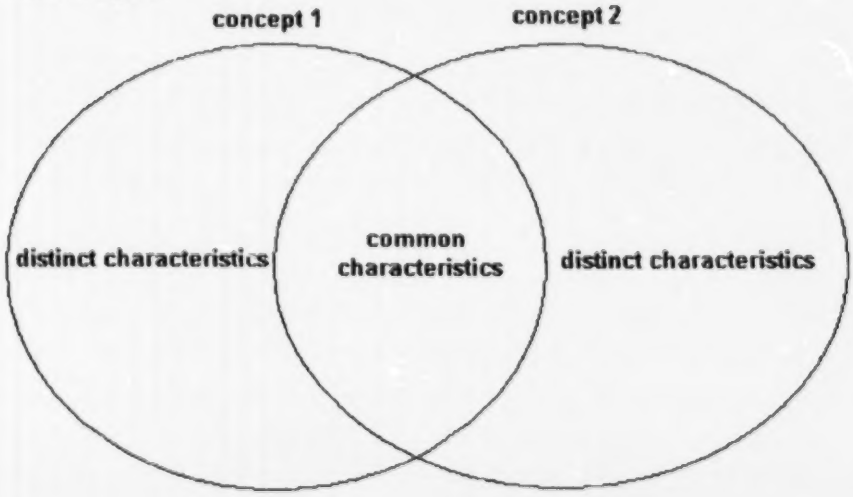
After introducing a topic, tapping into prior knowledge, setting a purpose, and monitoring comprehension, a Venn diagram can be used to encourage ELLs to make connections between two important words or concepts. Following the selection of two distinguishable traits (e.g., two novels, two characters within a novel, two key vocabulary words, or any other comparable concepts), students orally discuss the similarities and differences between the paired concepts. As the teacher writes down the distinguishable traits, students should be encouraged to work collaboratively with their peers for further comprehension and interpretation.

Purpose

Venn diagrams assist spatial and visual learners by transforming complex information into visually comprehendible charts. The visual representation of information also gives ELLs a cognitive warehouse of knowledge where retrieval and recall is facilitated (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001). Social skills are promoted by encouraging students to express their opinions and appreciate others. The strategies learned through Venn diagrams will contribute to progression of literacy development by developing students' background knowledge, promoting motivation for reading, and encouraging oral and reading skills through classroom participation (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001).

Table 4

Venn Diagram

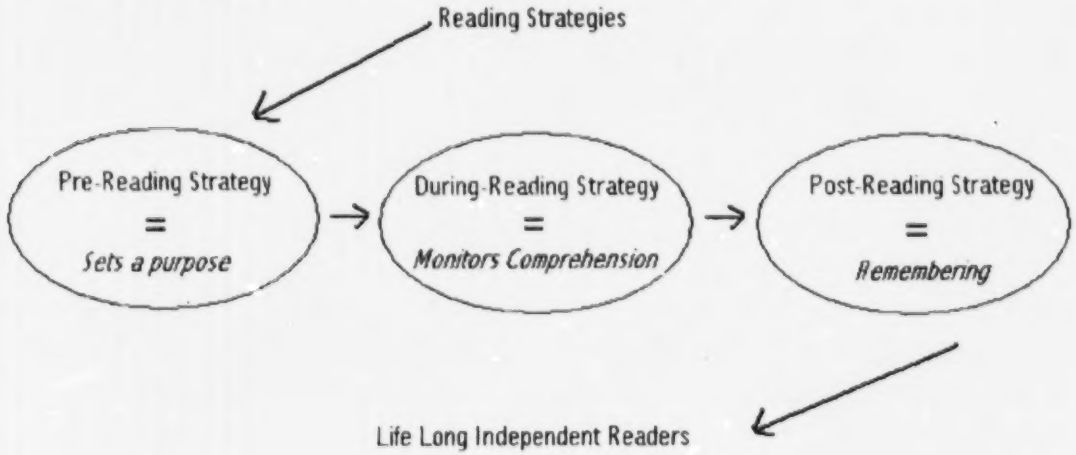


Overview

Figure 1 is a graphical overview of the process and general benefits of teaching reading strategies to ELLs. Reading strategies are broken into three dependent strategies—the pre-reading strategy aims to set a purpose—the during-reading strategy focuses on establishing comprehension—finally, the post-reading strategy generates memorization through meaningful rehearsal activities. Graphic organizers put salient points into comprehensible and manageable sections. Teachers should always be encouraged to supplement literacy activities with the use of graphical representations (see Appendix 4).

Figure 1

Process of implementing reading strategies



Summary

The importance of using reading strategies throughout the reading process is an important skill necessary for comprehension, academic success, memorization, enjoyment, and satisfaction (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001). Although the strategies discussed in the present workshop emphasize reading strategies for expository texts, there are copious amounts of other strategies available for a variety of reading purposes. It is important to note that the reading strategies discussed in the current workshop can be adjusted to varying degrees of reading proficiency. The level of scaffolding provided can dramatically change the enjoyment of more difficult reading strategies. However, some reading strategies require a high level of thinking (Venn Diagrams) and should be used with careful attention to the student's cognitive abilities. Carefully monitoring and assessing students' literacy abilities will allow teachers to better select reading activities appropriate to individual learning styles and skills. Selecting enjoyable, yet challenging reading material will give ELLs the motivation to become life long independent readers (Mallow & Patterson, 1999). Teaching reading strategies will help ELLs attain this ultimate literacy goal.

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References

Mallow, F., & Patterson, L. (1999). *Framing Literacy: Teaching/Learning in K-8 Classrooms*. Norwood, MA: Christopher Gordon Publishers.

Peregoy, S., & Boyle, O. (2001). *Reading, Writing, & Learning in ESL*. New York: Addison Wesley Longman.

Appendix 1

Topic: _____ Date: _____

K-W-L Chart

Know "K"	Want to Know "W"	Learned "L"

Appendix 2

!!! Word Cluster !!!

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Appendix 3

Venn Diagram

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Appendix 4

Reading Activity Sheet

Directions

Use the following passage for fluent to flexible English proficient students. The preceding appendixes can be used the supplement comprehension and retention.

1. Introduce the topic (cats and dogs).
2. Introduce the K-W-L worksheet—write down any information students know about cats and dogs.
3. Depending on literacy goals, have the students read to themselves or follow as you read each sentence.
4. Using the K-W-L worksheet (W-column), write down the information students wish to learn.
5. Reread the passage. Again, adjust reading tasks according to your students' goals.
6. Use the sentence with an omitted word to develop vocabulary and confirm understanding of key concepts.
7. Complete the K-W-L worksheet by filling in the L-column.
8. Monitor comprehension and develop retention by implementing the post-reading strategies discussed in the workshop (Venn Diagram).

Cats and Dogs

Cats and dogs are very popular pets. Ownership of pets can be traced back to 450 B.C., when Egyptians domesticated cats to protect their valuable jewels. Domesticated dogs can be traced back to the early American settlers. Dogs were used to help the settlers hunt wild animals. Because cats and dogs have _____ personalities, people generally have strong opinions on which pet is better. Cats are very low maintenance, but extremely independent. In contrast, dogs are very high maintenance and extremely reliant on their owner's love and affection. For example, a cat does not need to be taken out for long walks and are fairly well behaved. Dogs demand long walks and have the potential to cause great damage to rugs, electronics, appliances, or any other valuable household goods.

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